

## **Testimony in Support of Next Generation Connecticut Monday, March 4, 2013**

Good afternoon, Senator Fonfara and Representative Widlitz and members of the Committee, my name is Joseph McGee and I am Vice President of The Business Council of Fairfield County. I am here this afternoon with Sandra Goldstein, President of The Stamford Downtown Services District and Rachel Goldberg, General Counsel and Acting Executive Director of The Stamford Redevelopment Commission. Our organizations' membership encompasses businesses in both Downtown Stamford, the location of the UCONN Campus, and the corporate community in Fairfield County.

We support the Next Generation Connecticut initiative presented to the Committee by UCONN President Herbst.

The Connecticut economy has been plagued by slow job creation over the last 20 years—in fact, the slowest in the nation. The need to reshape our economy is the most important task facing this legislature. The investment proposed by Governor Malloy and President Herbst recognizes that “colleges and universities are essential to the growth of a knowledge-based economy.” The Federal Support for Academic Research study issued October 18, 2012 by the Congressional Research Service stated, “Approximately 80% of leading industries result from research conducted at academic institutions”. It also concludes that “the long-term competitiveness of the nation is linked to the strength of academic research infrastructure.”<sup>1</sup>

Every major analysis of the Connecticut economy over the last 25 years has stressed the need for the State and its academic institutions to increase the commitment to basic research and to commercialize that research for the benefit of economic growth and job creation in Connecticut. Success in the new economy requires innovation, and innovation thrives where new ideas are welcomed and nurtured. However, in the America's Top States for Business 2012 report issued by CNBC, while Connecticut placed second in Education nationwide, it has stagnated at 18<sup>th</sup> in Technology and Innovation<sup>2</sup>. Meanwhile, New York City's worldwide pursuit of its Applied Sciences NYC initiative<sup>3</sup>, its partnership with Columbia University to create a new institute for data sciences and engineering<sup>4</sup>, and its launch of the NYC Media Lab<sup>5</sup> to promote innovation in

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<sup>1</sup> Matthews, Christine M. “Federal Support for Academic Research.” Congressional Research Committee: October 18, 2012. [www.crs.gov](http://www.crs.gov). Summary and p. 14. March 1, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> [www.cnbc.com](http://www.cnbc.com). “Top States 2012: Overall Ranking.” 2012: [www.cnbc.com/id/46414199/Top\\_States\\_for\\_Business\\_2012](http://www.cnbc.com/id/46414199/Top_States_for_Business_2012). Feb 28, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> New York City Economic Development Corporation. “Mayor Bloomberg, Cornell President Skorton And Technion President Lavie Announce Historic Partnership to Build a New Applied Sciences Campus on Roosevelt Island.” NYCEDC: December 19, 2011. <http://www.nycedc.com/press-release/mayor-bloomberg-cornell-president-skorton-and-technion-president-lavie-announce>. March 1, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> New York City Economic Development Corporation. “Mayor Bloomberg And Columbia University President Bollinger Announce Agreement to Create New Institute For Data Sciences And Engineering.” NYCEDC: July 30, 2012. <https://www.nycedc.com/press-release/mayor-bloomberg-and-columbia-university-president-bollinger-announce-agreement-create>. March 1, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> New York City Economic Development Corporation. “Mayor Bloomberg Launches NYC Media Lab.” NYCEDC: June 14, 2010. <https://www.nycedc.com/press-release/mayor-bloomberg-launches-nyc-media-lab>. March 1, 2013.

Finally, Next Gen CT is building on the commitments made over the last 20 years to position UCONN as a Top 25 public university. In funding this initiative, we will position UCONN to become one of the Top 10 research universities in the country.

In closing, it bears repeating that one of the most important aspects of Next Generation Connecticut that will make that leap possible is the expansion of its UCONN Stamford campus. By increasing UConn's capacity in Fairfield County, we will benefit more students by providing more opportunities for learning, achievement, and employment, especially among emerging businesses with a need for skilled employees in STEM fields. They will have opportunities at companies like Owlstone, a Norwalk-based company producing lightweight chemical sensors using nanotechnology and software that needs chemists, scientists, and other STEM candidates who can work on commercial applications and support US clients. Meanwhile, there are other growing firms like GoECarts.com, a Bridgeport company providing e-commerce software through a SaaS (software as a service) model to e-commerce retailers and B2B firms that wants to add six to 10 technical employees in the next year. And at LogicTechnology, a Shelton company producing e-commerce supply chain application software to retailers, fulfillment companies and third parties, which needs an additional six to eight technical staff to assist in market research and application development around mobile technology and user interface designs in the next year. Students need these job opportunities in Connecticut and they need the education to seize them. Funding Next Generation Connecticut—growing a student body in proximity to both new and established employers—will do this. Such investments will create the next generation of careers and by fostering our students, we will create a synergistic atmosphere between our universities and businesses that will make our economy grow.